SAINT RITA
CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL

850-267-2558
14 Saint Rita Lane
Santa Rosa Beach
Florida 32459

Heather Carson, Director
Fr. James Valenzuela, Pastor

2026-2027

Parent Handbook

Revised August 2026

Florida Catholic Conference Accreditation
AND
Florida Department of Children and Families
Religious Exempt Status

St. Rita's Catholic Preschool is a child care facility operating under an exemption pursuant to the laws of the State of Florida and is not subject to licensure or regulation by the Department of Children and Families.

Mission Statement

As a ministry of St Rita Catholic Church, it is the mission of St Rita Catholic Preschool to educate our children in a safe and loving environment in the Catholic tradition, centered on the Eucharist. We strive to introduce our children to a life long relationship with Jesus by loving God and neighbor.

Table of Contents

Philosophy Statement	*3*
Parent Partnership	*3*
Classrooms and Staff/Student Ratios	*3*
Daily Classroom Schedule	*3*
Check In/Out Procedures	*4*
Curriculum	*4*
Child Development Learning Goals	*5*
Admission and Enrollment	*5*
Fees/Withdrawal Process	*6*
Termination/Expulsion Policy	*7*
Communication	*7*
Late Pick Up Fees	*8*
Classroom Behavior	*8*
Classroom Management and Discipline Statement	*9*
School Hours	*10*
Illness & Medication	*11*
Items from Home	*12*
Meals and Snacks	*13*
Nap & Rest Time	*13*
Birthdays	*13*
Bathroom Needs	*13*
Cleaning Policy	*14*
Emergency Procedures	*14*
Prayers	*14*
Field Trips	*14*
Use of Student Picture and Information	*15*
Fingerprinting	*15*
Parent Volunteer Program	*15*
Reporting and Confidentiality	*15*
Non-Discrimination Statement	*16*
Tuition	*16*
School Calendar	*16*
Handbook Agreement	*16*
Immunization Policy	*17*

Class Prayer Listing

Preschool Philosophy

Saint Rita Preschool recognizes the indwelling Holy Trinity as the source of the dignity of every human person. As children of God we reflect this reality in love and respect for all.
Saint Rita Preschool aspires to make saints. We teach the entire person through the integration of body, mind, and spirit. We foster each child's physical, academic and spiritual growth.
Saint Rita Preschool is a partner with parents as the first teachers of their children. We provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment rooted in the Catholic Church.

Parent Partnership

With a focus on each individual child's development, we will work with the parents to ensure we are in communication of goals and expectations for the child. In an effort to maintain consistency between home and school, we will regularly discuss learning goals and expectations. Over the course of the initial few months of school, we would expect to learn how best to work together with the parents so that your child has the best possible scenario for growth and development. We encourage you to also take home some experiences including prayer before meals and bedtime.

Classrooms and Staff/Student Ratios

We have 4 classrooms with ages ranging from 2 months to 59 months. Children may be shifted to a new classroom based on their developmental status. We will communicate with the child's parents in advance to discuss the child's movement.

Infants Room - 2 -12 months
One's Room - 12 - 24 months
Two's Room - 24 - 36 months
Three's Room - 36 - 48 months
Four's Room - 48 - 60 months

State of Florida Staff to Child Ratios

Under 12 months	1:4
12 months to under 24 months	1:6
24 months to under 36 months	1:11
36 months to under 48 months	1:15
48 months to under 60 months	1:20
Over 60 months	1:25

If ages are mixed in a common space and a child under the age of 24 months is in care, the ratio defaults to the youngest child's age grouping. When children 24 months and older are in care, the staff to child ratio shall be based on the age group with the largest number of children within the group.

Daily Classroom Schedule

Schedules will vary depending on classroom and age. Please see daily class schedules posted in each of our classrooms for a more specific schedule that is appropriate for your child's age group.

* If your child will be absent or arrive later than 8:30 AM, due to a Dr. Appointment: you must contact the Director for approval of arrival time. Our goal is to not disrupt our normal schedule for the class.

St Rita Schedule

7:00 AM - 7:45 AM	Early Drop off
8:15 AM - 8:30 AM	Regular Drop Off
9:00 AM - 2:45 PM	Curriculum starts, schedules are according to each classroom
2:45 PM - 4:00 PM	Regular Pickup

Check In/Out Procedures

Safe arrival and departure procedures have been developed to ensure all children are accounted for throughout the day. We use the Brightwheel app to check your child in/out the classroom electronically each day. You will receive an invitation via email to sign up to receive daily notifications and photos using the Brightwheel app.

Curriculum

Saint Rita Preschool utilizes the following
Creative Curriculum for ages 2 months to 5 years to help plan and implement a developmentally appropriate program for our students.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a focused approach through which even the youngest children build a deep, lifelong relationship with Christ and His Church. It uses a Montessori method to profoundly engage children based on Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy. Children gather in a specially prepared room called the Atrium, which is filled with a rich variety of beautifully hand crafted materials related to Christ's life, His parables, the Liturgy, and the Sacraments. Unlike a traditional classroom setting for formation, the Atrium facilitates the child's immersion into a quiet and meditative environment. CGS was born from the joy of the children in their encounter with God and the announcement of God's love experienced through Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who died and is risen.

His Little Way is a Catholic Pre - K religion program for three and four year olds that introduces the foundations of the faith in a simple, engaging, and age - appropriate way. Rooted in the liturgical year, the program helps children grow in their love for Jesus while learning basic prayers, virtues, and the meaning of Church seasons.

Our goal at Saint Rita Preschool is to give your child an opportunity to expand socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically. Teachers and children will work together to form questions and explore materials through project work, creative themes, center areas and child-initiated play.

Child Development Learning Goals

Social and Emotional:

- Learn to trust others
- Gain independence
- Take initiative and assert themselves in a socially acceptable manor

Cognitive:

- Enhance through dramatic play
- Block building
- Manipulating objects
- Painting and language activities

Physical

- Develop motor skills:
    - Gross Motor: Running, balancing, jumping and climbing.
    - Fine Motor: Eye hand coordination, string beads, cutting with scissors and writing.

Admission and Enrollment

Availability is determined according to Waitlist Priority

1. Current student.
2. Siblings of students currently enrolled.
3. Active and contributing Saint Rita Parishioners.
    a. Contributing is defined as time, talent, and treasure
4. Children on the waiting list that do not fall in the categories above

Rooms are filled on a first come first served basis.

Admission Process

Parents will be notified according to availability and offered an opportunity to tour the preschool. Parent(s) and child(ren) will tour the school to review the following topics such as schedule, hours, fees, meals, health policies, supervision policies, check in/out policies, philosophy, curriculum and items the parents need to bring to school for the child. Following the tour, the parent will be given 48 hours to accept or decline the admission to our preschool.

Enrollment Procedures

Once a decision is made, the family will meet first with the Director to complete and review the following:

1. Registration Application - parents will complete the registration form and pay the non-refundable registration fee. This is due to reserve a spot for your child(ren).
2. Documents required before first day of attendance:
    a. Student's birth certificate
    b. Florida Immunization records (If exempt, we need Form DH 680)
    c. School Entry Physical Form
    d. Handbook Acknowledgement Form

e. Student Information Form
f. Emergency Contact Form
g. Food Project Permission Slip
h. Helen McCall Park Permission Slip
i. Photograph Consent Form
j. Authorization for Medication Form
k. Annual Medication Information Form
l. Florida Distracted Adults Form
m. Florida Influenza Virus Form

3. New Students - Students who are new to our school will be on probation for the first two weeks. At the close of the period, they will be evaluated for progress, both academically and behaviorally, to ensure that they are able to progress in our program. Note: Saint Rita Catholic Preschool will make every effort to assist students with special needs. However, the Preschool after evaluating the needs of the child will determine whether the student's educational needs can be met and whether continued enrollment at the Preschool is in the best interest of the student.
4. Health Records - If any health records form expires during the school year, then the child may not return to school until the Director receives the updated forms.
5. Parent Orientation - after forms have been completed, the parent(s) meet with the teacher to discuss the routine and the procedures of the classroom the child is entering. We hold an annual parent orientation prior to the first day of the school year. The parents will stay with their child for orientation to spend time with the teacher and to explore the centers. All children transition differently so the teachers work with the parents to make each transition as easy as possible.

* The Director reserves the right to adapt classroom age guidelines listed above as necessary to avoid scheduling/classroom occupancy conflicts.

Reserving a spot
Saint Rita Catholic Preschool does not reserve spots with paid registration fees, supply fees and tuition fees whether the child(ren) attends preschool or not.

Withdrawal Process
A thirty (30) written notice must be given to avoid incurring tuition fees past the date you plan to withdraw your child. You must send an email to the director heather@saintritaparish.org for the thirty (30) day notices to be valid. Other notifications such as verbal communication with a staff member will not be considered valid notices. Once a Withdrawal email has been submitted, changes with an earlier date will not be accepted. Failure to give the required (30) day notice will result in monetary charges for a full month's tuition irrespective of whether the child attends or not. This allows the Preschool adequate time to prepare for the child's departure for the Preschool and a new family adequate time to enroll.

Please Note: When sending an email with a withdrawal notice parents are expected to include their reason for withdrawal.

Termination/Expulsion Policy
Every effort will be made to prevent the termination of a child from the Preschool, however, if they meet any of the following criteria, St. Rita Preschool reserves the right to give notice of termination of enrollment. The criteria are as follows:

1. Tuition payments are one month behind and no payment arrangements have been made.
2. Lack of follow-through on special payment arrangements.
3. Failure to adhere to policies and procedures as communicated in the parent handbook.
4. The program is unable to meet the developmental needs of the child.
5. The child's behavior threatens the health and safety of him or herself, the other children, or the staff.
6. A parent's behavior is threatening or inappropriate towards the children, staff, or Director of the Preschool.
7. Failure to partner with the Academy concerning your child's development, health, and well-being.

Children with disabilities or special needs will not be terminated from the Preschool unless their behavior threatens the health and safety of themselves, the other children, or the staff. We make every effort to include children with disabilities or special needs. However, at times the care that a child may require could exceed our abilities at the Preschool. We will work with each family to determine the best course of action for a child in the event we can no longer provide the environment and support a child with disabilities or special needs required.

Fees

Saint Rita Catholic Preschool uses Brightwheel for all billing purposes. Once you have been accepted into our preschool, you will receive a notification to set up a Brightwheel account for billing purposes. Automatic payments can be made from a checking/savings account or through credit card.

- The non-refundable Registration Fee is exclusive of your monthly tuition and is billed immediately upon registration to reserve your child(ren)'s spot at our preschool.
- The one time Supply Fee is billed at the beginning of the school year or Summer Camp.
- Tuition
    - For monthly tuition, early care and late care, you may choose the 20th of each month as your invoice date.
    - For bi - weekly tuition payment plans, we invoice every other week
    - Tuition Fees will include early and late care if applicable

Fee Reminders:

- If the tuition payment is not received within 7 days of the due date, the child(ren) may not return to school until the bill is resolved.
- In the event of a temporary school closure, St Rita Preschool will not prorate tuition. All tuition, early care and late care fees are due regardless of vacation, illness or any temporary school closure.
- In the event of a permanent school closure, St Rita Preschool will hold an emergency meeting and discuss prorated tuition.

Late Pick Up Fees:
Parents are expected to pick up their child a few minutes **before** closing time. **You must pick up no later than 4:00 pm or a charge of $40.00 will be charged to your Brightwheel billing account.** The Director will be apprised of families who are consistently late and will then contact the family for a meeting to work on a solution.

Communication

Open communication between parents and staff is essential. The staff here at Saint Rita Preschool wants to build a collaborative partnership with our parents in educating and caring for your children. This partnership will need to be based on trust and a mutual understanding. Be sure to inform teachers of any changes in your child's life (moves, illness, parent out of town, etc.) so that they can be prepared for the possible changes in your child's behavior. Each day, infants will receive a daily report via Brightwheel which will provide parents with information about their child's day. Students one year of age and older will receive regular updates through Brightwheel, but they may not be daily. If a parent has any issues or concerns about their child's experience in the classroom a conference can be scheduled to discuss.

Parent-Director conferences can be scheduled throughout the year as needed. We have an open-door policy for these conferences. If needed, at the request of the parent or teacher, parent/Director conferences can be scheduled as often as needed if concerns or problems arise.

Parent-Teacher conferences are offered twice a year. Appointments may be made directly with the teacher. If needed, at the request of the parent or teacher, parent/teacher meetings can be scheduled as often as needed if concerns or problems arise.

Procedures for Parents with Concerns

1. Parents should first talk privately with their child's teacher about any questions or concerns, being careful not to talk about children in front of them or other parents. Please feel free to talk to your child's teacher briefly at arrival/departure and if you need more time then please schedule a private meeting with the teacher. Discussions of concerns between families and staff about specific children must be held in private.
    a. The teacher will document the conversation and submit it to the Director
2. If an issue persists after a parent/teacher conference, then the Director will get involved to assist in a resolution or to answer any questions.
3. If there are any further concerns about the same subject then the Director will call on the Parish Administrator to offer further assistance with the issue at hand. A final determination of the problem will be discussed with the parent.

Custody Concerns

Because custody issues can be contentious, the Director will deal with these delicate situations on a case by case basis. Each case will be decided on the best interest of the child first.

- The preschool must be advised and given a copy of all legal documentation on custody rights before they are implemented.
- Custody arrangements and visitation schedules must be fully disclosed to the Director and the teacher via direct communication. Legal documentation of the agreement must be on file with the Director. Any changes to the agreement on file regarding the scheduling must be directly communicated to the Director and a legal copy of the changed information should be given to the school immediately.
- Parent information (such as newsletters, notices, etc.) will be sent home to the primary custody parent. Written documentation should be provided to the Director and the teacher of any requests for any additional copies of school information regarding the child from the primary custody parent.
- Parental Responsibility Clause: We acknowledge that relationships can become difficult,

particularly during custody negotiations.

General Communication
Most information for parents (newsletters, information sheets, important notices, things needed, etc.) will be sent electronically. Be sure to login to the Brightwheel app daily for important notes or information, or leave your notifications turned on for Brightwheel.

Additional communication is provided to our parents/students through:

- Monthly Lesson Plans - all classes have monthly lesson plans. These will be posted on the classroom bulletin board along with any other important information related to the class activities.
- Monthly School Newsletters - a newsletter will be written by the Director and will include important information and calendar events.

Classroom Behavior

The behavior guidance techniques used by the staff will center around positive reinforcement, positive role modeling by adults, intervention techniques and redirection.

We attempt to help the child process feelings, recognize consequences, explore alternative solutions and outcomes. We try to develop safe and appropriate ways of interacting with others and the environment. Young children are beginning to learn how their actions can affect others. It is our responsibility to give them feedback and help them grow in respecting the rights and feelings of others. To accomplish these goals, we use the following techniques:

Respecting Others
According to their developmental level, children will be shown to:

- Respect the rights of other children
- Care for equipment and return things to the appropriate locations
- Have quiet time during directions, stories, nap, etc.
- Have the right to be given clear expectations for their use of the materials

Setting Limits
According to their developmental level, the children will be given limits in the following ways:

- Tell the children what they are to do in a positive tone
- Post rules prominently throughout the classroom for parents and staff to read
- Explain the classroom guidelines and apply consistently

Problem Solving
We appeal to the preschooler's growing intellectual and moral reasoning by using natural and logical consequences and asking questions to encourage problem solving. Teachers help the children identify their needs, feelings, causes, alternatives and choices. We provide cues such as the statement, "use your words."

Unmanageable Children
In an extreme situation, if a child continues to act out by biting, hitting, kicking or spitting on a staff member or other children, the parents will be called to come to the preschool. In some instances, the child may need to be removed from the preschool. Every effort will be made to work with the parent

and child to control any disruptive behavior. If the child continues to display disruptive or dangerous behavior, the parents will be required to meet with the Director to discuss the best plan of action for the child and the preschool.

Classroom Management and Discipline Statement

The Saint Rita Preschool teachers will create a safe, active, age appropriate environment for your child. They will set clear, consistent, fair limits for classroom behavior. The children will not be "subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating, frightening, or associated with food, rest or toileting, spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited by all child care personnel." This is per Florida Administrative Code 65C-22.001(8)(b). Teachers encourage appropriate behavior by reminding the children of the rules and rationale appropriate to their age. When inappropriate behavior does occur such as hitting, pushing, biting, calling names or teasing, etc. the teachers will discuss the situation with the child, redirect them to a more acceptable behavior or activity and apply logical consequences appropriate to their age and developmental level.

When a child's response is aggressive, unacceptable, or harmful, the teacher will intervene quickly and apply the previously mentioned strategies. The teachers will use positive guidance in talking to children. They will guide the children to resolve conflicts and model appropriate skills that will help children begin to solve their problems on their own. Older children are encouraged to verbalize their wants and feelings; teachers help younger children recognize their feelings. Physical punishment, harsh or humiliating techniques, or denying play due to punishment will not be utilized or tolerated. While at the center, we ask that parents not use harsh discipline tactics either. Parents may not discipline other children at our school. It is the job of the teachers to handle classroom behaviors.

Most often the teachers will anticipate and eliminate potential problems before they happen, but they will not be able to see or stop every inappropriate behavior that occurs. If another child hurts a child an Incident Report will be written and signed by the parents of both children, the teacher and Director; the teachers will not disclose who the children were and we ask parents to respect this. The report will include what happened and how the incident was treated.

Upon serious incidents such as broken skin due to bite or a scratch, the parents will be notified immediately. If it is a biting incident and the skin is significantly open, the child should see a physician to reduce the risk of infection.

Administrative Discipline
Our teachers are trained when a student whose behavior becomes more than what the teacher can handle he/she will be sent to the Director. A student/Director conference will result in a notice to the parents advising of the discipline issues and requesting a conference with the parents immediately. In the event of consistent unacceptable behaviors with a student, disciplinary actions include immediate parent notification, parent conferences with the teacher and Director, requiring the parent to come to school to stay with the child for the entire day and possible expulsion.

School Policy and Director's Right to Amend:
Any student action that is not in keeping with the philosophy/objective of Saint Rita Catholic Preschool is subject to the review of the administration and may lead to withdrawal from school.

The Director and the Parish Administrator are the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any disciplinary rules for just cause at his and/or her discretion.

School Hours

School Day Hours: Monday thru Friday 7:00 am to 4:00 pm

******Every day staff has a 30 minute meeting from 7:45 am -8:15 am******

Drop off procedure
We request that you arrive with your child no earlier than when their scheduled school day begins (7:00 am or 8:15 am). Our teachers arrive early to ready themselves and their rooms for the day.

We understand there will be doctor appointments, vacations, etc, so please communicate via Brightwheel any planned tardiness or absences that you may have with your child's teacher.

Pick up procedure
For your child's safety, we do require each child be picked up by you or an authorized person no later than 4:00 PM. If an authorized person is picking up your child, they must present a photo ID to the teacher.

If an emergency presents a delay and you will be late picking up your child, please call the preschool before closing time. In the event that your child is still at the center after closing and we have not heard from you, we will take the following steps:

1. Attempt to reach you at the designated numbers on file.
2. Call the authorized pick up person(s)
3. Call the authorities in conformity with state law.

Drop off and Pick Up Reminders

- Make sure the teacher is aware of your child's arrival and departure from class.
- Parents/guardians must fill out an authorized pick up list in the child's enrollment packet. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the preschool of any changes in this authorization.
- If someone other than an authorized person is picking up the child, the parent must verbally notify the teacher and Director of this.

Illness & Medication

As children begin to have contact with people outside of their own families, they come into contact with germs and bacteria that are foreign to their bodies. Even though the child can become sick, being exposed to these germs can strengthen a child's young immune system. Building immunities can help the child fight off things such as the common cold. Although building immunity is a good thing, we do want to protect a child from an unusually high exposure to germs.

In a preschool setting, children come into contact with groups of other children outside of their families. It is in this situation that the illness of one child can spread rapidly throughout the group to other children and staff members. The staff at the preschool will take constant precautions to prevent the spread of disease. Many common childhood diseases are contagious. Intestinal tract infections spread through coughing, sneezing and runny noses. Other diseases are spread through direct

contact. Careful hand washing by staff and children can eliminate approximately 75% of the risk of spreading these illnesses. Other precautions include separating sick children from those who are well, taking extra precautions with diapered or toilet training children and working to maintain sanitary conditions throughout the preschool.

Sick Child Policy
Do not bring your child to school if he/she has had any of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours. If your child is at school and shows any sign of the symptoms listed below, you will be called to pick them up. Please help us protect the other children by responding promptly.

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Pneumonia
- Fifths Disease
- Unidentified Rash – rash must be identified and treated before returning
- Fever-100.4 - You may return 24 hours after fever has broken without the administration of medication. If your child requires to be on an antibiotic, he/she must be on the antibiotic for 24 hours before returning to school
- Severe Coughing—child gets red or blue face, child makes a high-pitched croup or whooping sound after cough, difficult or rapid breathing– esp. in infants, yellowish skin or eyes

Parents will be notified if the child has any of the previously mentioned symptoms and the parent notified is expected to pick up the child within one hour.

Communicable Disease
In the event of an outbreak of a communicable disease, all parents will be notified by an Illness Alert posted on the bulletin board in your child's classroom. A Brightwheel alert from the Director will also be sent out to parents. Parents should report all communicable illnesses to the Director as soon as possible. The name of the child who is ill will not be given to other parents.

Contagious Symptoms or Illnesses:
If contagious symptoms or illnesses are present when observing a child, the child will not be allowed to attend the Preschool. For a majority of the contagious symptoms or illnesses, a physician's note is required to be turned in to the Director before a child can return to the Preschool. If we do not receive a physician's note, the child can not return to school.

******Please see the list of contagious illnesses attached******

Medication
A staff member may administer oral or topical medication to a child provided:

- The medication is brought in the original container with the child's full name clearly marked. (no sharing between siblings).
- The medication must be delivered directly to the Director
- Routine medication will be kept in a locked cabinet in the Director's office
- Emergency medication, such as an Epipen, will be kept in the child's classroom
- An authorization for medication form must be filled out and accompany all medication. Instructions on the form must agree with the prescription label, over the counter label or doctor's instructions as appropriate.
- Complete prescription information, if any, is clearly marked on the container.

- Medications of any kind including ointments, lip balm, pills, vitamins or liquids may not be placed in a child's lunch box, bookbag or carried in the student's pockets.

Routine medication such as diaper cream, sunscreen and bug spray may be sent in, but must have an authorization form filled out. Authorization forms must be filled out monthly.
No medications are directly accessible to children. Staff members will document the time and dosage of medication administered on the authorization form. All empty medication containers will be returned to the parents.

Items from Home

Clothing
Each child will be required to bring a labeled zip lock bag with a seasonably appropriate change of clothes. The change of clothes will need to include underwear and socks. These clothes need to remain at the school for emergencies.

Personal Belongings
The Preschool is not responsible for any misplaced, lost or damaged personal items. Please put your child's full name on every item. We ask that you do not allow your child to bring toys to school. The teachers may have Show and Tell Days at their discretion. It's hard to share them with all of our friends and they are often lost or damaged. Toys and items of value should be left at home.

Meals and Snacks

If your child has any type of food allergy, the parent is responsible for notifying the school in writing. If your child will need an EpiPen, you must provide it to the Director and fill out an Authorization for Medication Form. The EpiPen will be given to the child's teacher to be kept in the classroom in case of an emergency. Special food restrictions, including food allergies are shared with child care personnel and posted in a conspicuous location in the classroom to ensure your child's safety during snack and lunch time.

We are a nut free school. All children at the preschool will bring a separate AM & PM snack and lunch to school. Please include a separate drink with snack and lunch. All lunchboxes, thermos cups, sippy cups, bottles, baby food and pouches should be labeled with your child's name. Children may do cooking projects in the classroom and a signed consent form from the parent must be kept in the student's file.

Nap & Rest Time

Infants
Infants are provided with their own crib. Infants up to 6 months nap on their own schedule. Infants 6 months to 1 year have scheduled nap times but are able to sleep when they wish. You will need to bring two clean crib sheets at the beginning of each school week. The first dirty crib sheet will go home for washing on Wednesdays and the second dirty crib sheet will go home for washing on Fridays.

Toddlers and Preschoolers
Each child will receive a nap mat. Please bring in a nap mat or crib sheet and blanket on Monday of each week. The nap linens will go home for washing on Wednesdays and again on Fridays. Nap time is provided for all children in our preschool program, please see their class schedule for specific nap time.

Birthdays

Birthdays are likely very important to you and your child and we will be glad to help you celebrate. If you would like to bring a special snack, please make arrangements with your child's teacher. The state of Florida does require that any refreshments brought into the classroom must be store bought and sealed.

If you plan to have a birthday party for your child outside of school and you plan to invite all students in your child's class then we welcome you to hand out your child's invitations at school. If you do not intend to invite all students then please handle your invitations outside of school.

Bathroom Needs

For those children in diapers- Please provide disposable diapers and wipes for your child to be kept at school in their cubby. We do not accept cloth diapers. We will notify you when the supply needs to be replenished. All of our students must be potty trained by age three.

For those children who are potty trained- We encourage you to visit the bathrooms with your child to familiarize them with the potty, sinks, soap and paper towels. The three and four year old classrooms do not have changing tables. Teachers are not allowed in the bathroom area with students unless there is an emergency. If your child has more than two accidents within a 24 hour period you will be notified to pick them up.

Cleaning policy

Teachers will wipe down tables, chairs, toys, surfaces as needed throughout the day and at the end of each day. Classrooms are swept, mopped, and disinfected at the end of each day. Each classroom gets a "deep clean" twice a week by our parish cleaning team.

Emergency Procedures

We have developed procedures to ensure the safety of your child in case of an emergency. These procedures and evacuation routes are posted at the door of each classroom. Local police and fire authorities have been notified of our location and assure speedy reactions to any emergency. Monthly fire drills are also conducted at the school.

If any child should need emergency medical care, he/she will be transported to Sacred Heart Hospital ER by ambulance and parents will be contacted immediately. The Director/teacher will accompany the child and remain with the child until parents arrive.

For minor injuries, first aid kits and the teachers will clean the injury with soap and water and apply ice if needed. All minor injuries that occur are reported to the parent on a paper Incident Report

and/or via Brightwheel. The parent, the teacher and the Director will sign and keep the incident report filed in the Director's office.

Bad Weather Days
When the threat of weather is in the area, our school will follow the Walton County School District closings. You may also check with the Director for any other closings.

Prayers

We pray together with the children throughout the day, but especially in the morning, before snack and lunch. The prayers are posted in the back of this handbook so they may be easily posted at your home. We ask that you say the prayers with your child on a regular basis.

Field Trips

Saint Rita Preschool does not go on field trips. The children do go on nature walks on church grounds, walk on the church walkway and play at the church playground. Students go to the Church and Parish Life Center to use the gym. The children also go on a walk to Helen McCall Park and play on the playground. The teacher will notify the parents if the classroom will be going to Helen McCall Park. Parents or guardians will need to sign a form giving their child permission to go on walks to Helen McCall Park. This signed form will be kept in the student's file.

Use of Student Picture and Information

Parents or guardians of students who attend Saint Rita Preschool must sign a consent form giving permission or not giving permission for all photographs taken during the school year to be used by Saint Rita Preschool for Brightwheel, our website, advertising or publicity. This signed consent form will be kept in the student's file.

Fingerprinting

According to the Department of Children and Families and the Diocese, all staff are required to be fingerprinted and background checked before hiring. Any parent or adult who intends to have routine contact with the students is required to be fingerprinted and background checked before working with the students. Parents who are not fingerprinted are not permitted to be left alone with the students for any reason. A teacher should accompany the parent while with the class.

Parent Volunteer Program

We believe our school is built upon the relationships between our parents and our school. Parent involvement is one of the many factors which contribute to the success of our school. We request that each family please complete 5 volunteer hours during our school year. As a volunteer you could become a room mom or help us coordinate the following events:

- Trunk or Treat
- Preschool Thanksgiving Feast
- Preschool Christmas Party

- Donuts with Dad
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Muffins with Mom
- Saint Rita Feast Day
- Graduation Party

Reporting and Confidentiality

Child Abuse
Florida law requires that persons who work with children and have reason to believe, that a child is coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse are required to report suspected child abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline. They are also required to notify the person in charge of the institution of suspected abuse and to make a written report. All staff members are oriented to this policy. Child abuse is defined as: serious physical or mental injury that is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental; or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation; or serious physical neglect of a child under 18 years of age.

Confidentiality
The DCF regulations state that staff may not disclose information concerning a child or family, except in the course of inspections and investigations by agents of the Department. The staff must keep confidentiality concerning children at all times. The staff will not disclose information regarding the children as to which the child has an illness (although the illness itself will be posted), which child is biting or behaving inappropriately in the room, or the developmental progress of other children.

In order to provide mutual respect and consideration for other children and families, we ask that parents not discuss other people's children, classroom situations, or teachers while within the Saint Rita grounds or on campus.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The school has an open admission policy. No person, on the grounds of race, color, disability or national origin, is excluded or otherwise subjected to discrimination in the receiving of services. Nor does the school discriminate in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, color, disability, age, gender, or national origin.

Tuition

All Tuition and Fees are described on the Registration Form.

School Calendar

Each family will be given a copy of Saint Rita Catholic Preschool calendar during orientation that is required for parents or guardians to attend at the beginning of each school year. In general, Saint Rita Catholic Preschool follows Walton county school calendar. Therefore, Saint Rita Preschool will be closed the same days as Walton county schools. We also have other days noted for professional development throughout the year.

Handbook Agreement

The last official act of enrollment and acceptance of each student into Saint Rita Preschool is the signing of a contract that states this handbook has been read and accepted as the governing vehicle between home and school. The parent handbook acknowledgement form must be signed by the child's parent/legal guardian during the mandatory parent orientation meeting and returned to the Director.

Code of Conduct Agreement

The purpose of the Code of Conduct Agreement is to provide a mutual understanding to all parents/guardians and visitors to our school about conduct expectations while on parish property, at parish events and when interacting with parish staff, students, other parents or parishioners. The Code of Conduct Agreement must be signed by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) prior to enrollment.

Immunization Policy

As of August of 2018 the Diocese requires immunizations for our preschoolers. Prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to preschools/schools (Kindergarten through 12th grade), each student must present proof of having had the immunizations as required by Florida state law. There are generally recognized to be three types of exemptions sought from the schools' immunization policy: religious, conscience, and medical.

Religious Exemption
There is nothing in Catholic moral teachings which would hold that the use of vaccines is immoral and sinful. Accepting the opinion of the much respected National Catholic Bioethics Center, the Bishops of Florida take the position that, "Catholic schools or a Catholic diocese cannot grant an exemption from vaccines on religious grounds since the Catholic Church does not teach that the use of vaccinations ... is intrinsically evil." Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on religious beliefs will not be considered in any Catholic schools in this Diocese.

Conscience Exemption
The risk to public health in our Catholic schools has been determined to be too grave to allow exemptions from immunizations on the basis of conscience, or even for parents who erroneously believe that it would be sinful to have their children immunized. Social teachings of the Catholic Church are firm and consistent on the "common good" as the principle guide to reason in this regard. In justice, we consider and sometimes place the needs of others above our own. It is in that spirit that the Catholic Church recognizes a parent's right to decide what is in the best interest of their child, so long as the effects of that decision only impacts them or their child. It is clearly a different matter when the consequences of that decision potentially put others at risk. The good of respecting the conscience of parents of a single child is outweighed by the harm which could come to many as a result of an exemption on the basis of conscience. Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on conscience will not be considered in any Catholic schools of this Diocese.

Medical exemption
Medical exemptions will be considered, but only if a determination can be made by Diocesan officials that, based on medical evidence, admission of the child without a vaccination would not constitute a health risk to the school community under the circumstances. If such a determination cannot be

made, a medical exemption will not be granted. This exemption is reserved to Diocesan officials and is not to be granted at the Parish or School administration level."

Handbook Disclaimer

Since situations can arise that were not foreseen at the time of writing this Handbook, the school reserves the right to initiate, change or modify the policies as needed. Parents will be notified of any amendments.

St. Rita's Catholic Preschool is a child care facility operating under an exemption pursuant to the laws of the State of Florida and is not subject to licensure or regulation by the Department of Children and Families.